DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 639 RC 020 534

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TITLE	Teachers for Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students: Meeting an Urgent Need.
PUB DATE	96
NOTE	13p.; Chapter 10 in: Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts To Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students; see RC 020 526.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bilingual Teachers; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Institutional Cooperation; International Cooperation; *International Educational Exchange; *Mexican American Education; Spanish Speaking; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Shortage
IDENTIFIERS	Mexico; *Office of Bilingual Educ Minority Lang Affairs; United States

ABSTRACT

In light of growing numbers of Mexican immigrants and other Spanish speakers in the United States, public schools must deal with shortages of certified bilingual teachers. This chapter describes efforts to address such shortages by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) and other agencies of the U.S. Department of Education. In 1990, the U.S. Department of Education and the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on Education, which aimed to enhance educational cooperation between the two countries and which called for a joint Border Conference on Education, held in October 1991. Following a renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding in 1993, national agreements of cooperation were concluded in the areas of teacher exchange, teacher training programs, and curriculum exchange. To advance these agreements, OBEMLA sponsored joint invitational symposia in 1994 and 1995, and OBEMLA and the University of Texas at El Paso established the Binational Initiative for Educational Development, which sponsors binational meetings to promote collaborative projects, seminars and workshops on teacher exchanges and bilingual teacher recruitment and training, and a summer institute for Mexican and U.S. educators and researchers. OBEMLA has also promoted efforts to recruit and certify foreign teachers and to develop comparable teacher education programs at U.S. and Mexican universities that will allow international transfers of credit. Other related efforts include the Border Colloquy, a series of meetings to envision the educational future of the U.S.-Mexican border region. Contains 16 references. (SV)

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CHAPTER 10

Teachers for Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students: Meeting an Urgent Need

NORMA VARISCO DE GARCÍA
AND
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The heads of the U.S. Department of Education and the Mexican Secretaría of Educación signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Education Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Mexico *in 1991; it has been renewed every 2 years since that time. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) has provided U.S. leadership in following through on provisions in the* Memorandum *related to teacher education. This chapter describes the rationale for subsequent activities—meant to address bilingual teacher shortages in the United States—and the collaboration taking place among Mexican and U.S. federal, state, and local officials, administrators, and educators.*

Background

Over the past two decades Mexico has remained the country of origin for the majority of immigrants to the United States. An estimated 1,655,843 Mexican citizens have emigrated to the United States since 1981. This figure outnumbers any other nation of origin by over a million for the same time period (Figueroa & Garcia, 1994).

In 1990, the nation's 17.3 million Spanish speakers far outnumbered all other speakers of a foreign language in the United States. According to U.S. Census data, Spanish speakers now account for more than half of all people residing in the United States whose first language is not English. Half of all Spanish speakers live in California and Texas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1994).

Unfortunately in light of these facts, there is a scarcity of bilingual teachers to provide instruction to these children. According to a recent study (Fleishman & Hopstock, 1993), there are more than 360,000 teachers providing instruction to these students, but only 10 percent are credentialed bilingual teachers, and only 33 percent have ever taken a college course on culture, language acquisition, or teaching English to limited-English-proficient (LEP) pupils. To further aggravate the problem, the majority of these teachers are not proficient in Spanish (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Another study profiling U.S. teachers indicates that only two percent of the teachers in public schools and one percent of those in private schools are Hispanic (Feistritzer, 1986). Furthermore, the National Education Association (NEA) reports that the nation's teachers are still overwhelmingly white and female. A poll of its members shows that 87 percent are white and 72 percent are female. NEA executive Robert Chase said that the failure to attract and keep minority teachers threatens to deny minority students the role models they need (National Education Association, 1992).

It was in light of these facts that the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) embarked upon a binational effort to increase the number of qualified bilingual teachers and to help other teachers now serving LEP students to learn Spanish and increase their knowledge of the history and culture of students of Mexican origin. Much of this work is being done in collaboration with the Mexican Secretariat of Education.

The Memorandum of Understanding

On August 17, 1990, the U.S. Department of Education and the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on Education (Cavazos & Bartlett-Díaz, 1990). This action was taken within the framework of the United States/Mexico Binational Commission, which promotes cooperation between the two nations. The historic document was signed in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, by former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos and former Mexican Secretary of Education Manuel Bartlett-Díaz. It is the most comprehensive agreement that the U.S. Department of Education has made with any nation. Its purpose is to enhance cooperation between the two countries for improving the quality of education.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Education

Here are some of the main ideas briefly stated from the Memorandum of Understanding:

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Mexico under Article I:

GENERAL EDUCATION

(a) will encourage and develop cooperation and exchanges in the field of education on the basis of equality, mutual benefits, and reciprocity;

(b) such exchanges and cooperation shall be subject to the constitutions and applicable laws and regulations of the respective countries; and

(c) the cooperation provided for in this Memorandum . . . shall attempt to identify new areas for joint activities or where deemed appropriate by all concerned, to strengthen or expand existing programs.

In Article II:

METHODS OF COOPERATION

(a) 1. Encourage and facilitate closer relationships between state education agencies and offices, schools and school systems, postsecondary institutions, other educational entities and organizations, and private sector establishments in the two countries; and

2. Encourage mutually beneficial educational activities involving researchers, scholars, faculty members, teachers, educational administrators, and other specialists to lecture, teach, conduct research, and develop cooperative programs;

(b) 1. Cooperation that facilitates exchanges and dialogue centered on educational management, methods, evaluation, and research; and

2. In support of other bilateral initiatives and programs, the study and teaching of each other's language, culture, and history through the development of exchanges and cooperation.

In Article VI:

TERM OF MEMORANDUM: This Memorandum shall be effective September 1, 1990, and remain effective until December 31, 1991, after which it will be extended for successive 2-year periods...

Additional annexes for subsequent 2-year periods have been signed between both governments (Limon Rojas, M. Letter to U.S. Secretary Richard Riley, July 11, 1995; Riley, R. Letter to Mexican Secretary Limon Rojas, June 2, 1995; Riley & Zedillo, 1993).

The Memorandum of Understanding was timely, because it anticipated the need for increased cooperation that would be brought about by the implementation of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Memorandum expressed the intention to collaborate for an educational program that would contribute to providing a highly skilled, productive workforce interacting along the border of both countries.

Additional exchange visits by senior officials of both national education agencies occurred in December 1990 and June 1991. These visits resulted in further agreements. Subsequent annexes to the original Memorandum of Understanding were signed that placed further emphasis upon teacher education, teacher exchange, Spanish and English language instruction, technological education, joint university meetings, mathematics and science teaching, and migrant education (Tinsman, 1994).

Border Conference on Education

To enhance cooperative efforts among the 10 border states of the two nations, the Memorandum of Understanding called for a joint Border Conference on Education. The U.S. Department of Education and Secretaría de Educación Pública hosted this conference in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso in October 1991. The conference brought together one of the largest groups of educators (more than 300 chief state school officers, superintendents, university presidents and representatives, business executives, etc.) ever assembled from the two countries to learn about successful existing forms of cooperation and to agree on new and expanded areas of cooperation at both the lower and higher education levels. The conference focused on teacher exchange, the teaching of Spanish and English, teacher training, science and mathematics education, migrant education, literacy, dropout prevention, technical education, faculty and student exchanges, continuing education, and educational technology. Existing border arrangements were strengthened and new relationships were established. Various state education agencies, school systems, and institutions of higher education expanded cooperative efforts to improve education, upgrade the workforce, and stimulate lasting working relationships (U.S. Department of Education & Secretaría de Educación Pública de México, 1991).

Further Agreements

In December 1991, President Salinas appointed Ernesto Zedillo (currently Mexico's President), to replace Secretary of Education Manuel Bartlett-Díaz. Secretary Zedillo immediately hastened the educational reform begun by Secretary Bartlett-Díaz. As a first priority, he turned his efforts to overcoming the internal problems inhibiting reform and federal cooperation. The November 1992 election in the United States and subsequent appointment of a new U.S. Secretary of Education caused some further delay.

Then, in February 1993, Secretary Zedillo called on Secretary Riley, and the two secretaries reaffirmed the joint commitment to cooperate in education, concluding that both nations had much to gain from collaboration. They agreed to sign a new annex to the Memorandum of Understanding that continues the existing forms of educational cooperation and focuses upon those areas of greatest need and, consequently, of highest priority (Riley & Zedillo, 1993).

This Annex Three was signed by Secretary Riley and Secretary Zedillo at the U.S./Mexico Binational Commission meeting held in June 1993, and emphasizes cooperation in the areas of school-to-work transition, teaching of English and Spanish languages, early childhood education, education for the prevention of drug abuse, distance education, and educational research. It also calls for cooperation in the fields of teacher education, adult education, technical education, migrant education, and higher education.

On October 4-5, 1993, a subsequent meeting was held by U.S./Mexico senior education officers in Mexico, D.F., and an agreement of cooperation was concluded in the following three areas: teacher exchange, teacher training, and curriculum exchange. The report on this meeting (Tinsman, 1994) states that this collaborative effort is important due to the interaction of both countries in education, economics, cultural exchanges, and the evermore interlinking demographics.

First Steps in Collaboration

As the first step in advancing the U.S. Department of Education's efforts after the signing of the historic NAFTA agreement, OBEMLA hosted a joint meeting of U.S. and Mexican education representatives at the national meeting of Title VII project directors held in conjunction with the National Association for Bilingual Education conference in Los Angeles, February 18, 1994. For this meeting, OBEMLA director Eugene E. Garcia and his staff prepared a briefing book containing resources on teacher training, teacher exchange, and curriculum examples. The participants agreed that there was an urgent need to share information on existing curriculum, curriculum reform, and materials, with the goal of reenforcing curriculum exchange activities between the two countries.

OBEMLA followed up on the recommendations of participants by organizing a joint invitational symposium, "Curriculum Perspectives: Challenges for the Future [Perspectivas Curriculares: Retos para el Futuro]." This event, meant to accomplish curriculum goals established by the Memorandum of Understanding in education between the two countries, was held in conjunction with the annual conference of the Texas Association of Bilingual Education, November 10-12, 1994, and was sponsored by OBEMLA, the Mexican Secretaríat of Public Education, the Division of Bilingual Education and Special Language Instruction of the Texas Educa-

tion Agency, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, and the Southwestern Bell Foundation. The symposium allowed U.S. and Mexican educators to begin identifying specific materials, resources, methodologies, technologies, and other strategies for elementary and secondary education that can be used by schools in both countries to promote and implement education reform (Richey, 1995).

In order to identify presenters from the United States, input was solicited from state education agency bilingual education directors in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California, the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, and OBEMLA staff. Through collaboration with the Secretaría de Educación Pública, a program for the symposium was developed that included

- curriculum content sessions,
- educational policy,
- educational technology demonstrations,
- educational reform,
- publisher exhibits,
- publisher and educator panel discussions,
- curriculum exhibits,
- workshops, and
- networking.

The symposium drew participants from the 10 U.S. and Mexican border states as well as educators from Florida, Colorado, and Utah. Feedback received from the participants indicates that the symposium was a success, especially in the areas of exchanging materials and methodologies and building partnerships.

The Second U.S./Mexico Symposium took place at the Cibeles Convention Center, Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, September 14-15, 1995. It was cosponsored by OBEMLA and the Mexican Secretaríat of Public Education; the Texas Education Agency; the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory; and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on the Education of Students at Risk.

The goal of this symposium was to provide the participants with a unique learning and training experience, bringing them up to date on the latest efforts in the professional development field. An additional goal was to identify additional efforts needed to overcome the shortage of personnel who are well prepared to serve youth in the United States and Mexico.

Approximately 400 educators and members of local and state governments, as well as representatives of state education agencies, OBEMLA, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Secretaríat of Public Education of Mexico, participated in the symposium. The interchange of experiences and ideas identified new possibilities of communication and cooperation,

and opened a new era in our bilateral relationship and cooperation in the education field.

Proceedings of the symposium will be published in Spanish and English (Lara & Varisco de García, 1995).

Binational Initiative for Educational Development (El Paso/Ciudad Juárez Region)

In other efforts to alleviate shortages of bilingual teachers, OBEMLA and the University of Texas at El Paso have established the Binational Initiative for Educational Development to enhance education in the El Paso/Ciudad Juárez region. The Initiative has three major activities: (1) a series of meetings and forums to help educators from both sides of the border to become acquainted with each other, to identify topics of mutual interest and concerns, and to explore possibilities for collaborative projects; (2) a series of seminars and workshops of mutual interest to deal firsthand with the problems identified and to implement solutions; and (3) a summer institute involving educators from both sides of the border. These activities are being planned collaboratively with the assistance of the Secretary of Public Education of Mexico. The primary beneficiaries of the activities will be the children and educators of the El Paso/Juárez area. On the United States side, this will include the students and bilingual educators from the neighboring school districts, the El Paso Community College, and the University of Texas at El Paso (especially university students at two Title VII programs). Others who will benefit directly by collaborating with their U.S. counterparts include the children, educators, and researchers in the Ciudad Juárez area (Tinajeros & Lozano, 1994).

Meetings and forums. Educators and researchers from the United States and Mexico have begun a series of meetings to foster the interchange of ideas and expertise, the collaborative identification and the search for solutions, to improve the education provided to children in the border areas.

Seminars and workshops. In order to put the training and interchange of teachers into effect, OBEMLA sponsored three workshops at the NABE International Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in February 1995 in collaboration with the Secretary of Public Education of Mexico, the border states' state education agencies' directors, and local education agencies' administrators and directors of bilingual education.

- At one workshop, "Teacher Exchange with Mexico: How to Do It," local education agencies from border states that have already conducted teacher exchanges provided materials and information so that other interested local education agencies can learn the nuts and bolts of putting together a teacher exchange.
- The second workshop, "Bilingual Program Personnel Recruitment, Train-

ing, and Certification Activities in Illinois," building on the idea presented by the Secretaría of Educacíon (SEP) of Mexico that normal teachers already living in the United States should be identified and given a course of studies by a university or college, normalize their status, and be provided certification so that they can become part of the U.S. educational system. The administrators of the Board of Education of Chicago, Illinois, and the state education agency director for bilingual education of the state, presented the efforts and the success obtained in their unique program.

- Finally, at the third workshop, "United States Department of Education/México Secretaría de Educación Education Initiative: Federal, State, and Local," the Director of OBEMLA, a representative from the SEP/Mexico, and the state director of bilingual education for Texas discussed the philosophy behind and need for the U.S. Department of Education/OBEMLA-Secretaría de Educación Pública/Mexico Education Initiative, and outlined the next steps planned for its implementation.

The Summer Institute. Dr. Josefina Tinajeros (Sept. 1995) from the University of Texas at El Paso obtained a grant from OBEMLA to conduct summer institutes as a Binational Initiative Educational Development for Enhancement for Education. Local educational agencies (LEAs) attended the Summer Institute from both sides of the border. This Institute was held in Brownsville, September 11-14, 1995. Individual LEAS conducted the summer programs in teacher exchange in Brownsville, Texas.

OBEMLA concentrated its efforts in organizing and conducting the Second Binational Professional Development Symposium, held September 14-15, 1995, in Ciudad Juárez described above.

A committee of educators and researchers from both sides of the border, with support from both OBEMLA and SEP representatives, planned all aspects of the Summer Institute including the program, the length and time of the Institute, and guests and speakers to be invited.

Bridge to Higher Education

OBEMLA has been working with state education agencies in the area of personnel credentialing to ensure that graduates from training programs meet state certification and licensing requirements. This effort has been strengthened by the work to develop national bilingual/ESL competencies, competency standards, and guidelines to assess educator competency in language proficiency and cultural awareness. OBEMLA also has helped plan recruitment efforts outside of the United States. Credentialing of foreign teachers faces formidable obstacles since the expectations and standards differ across the nation (Impine-Hernandez, 1989).

At the higher education level, work remains to be done with universities and colleges in both countries to develop comparable, transferable credits

in bilingual education, ESL, Spanish, and culture and civilization. This way, students will be able to work toward a teaching degree accepted in both countries.

Training monies in the continuation programs under Transitional Bilingual Education, Special Alternative Education Programs, and Developmental Education Programs can be utilized to send U.S. teachers to Mexico to improve their Spanish language teaching abilities and skills. These teachers might receive higher education credits in the aforementioned areas of education when they take courses at Mexican colleges or universities.

OBEMLA is also working closely with certain local education agencies in the border states to increase the number of elementary and secondary teachers with bilingual or ESL language certification by modifying its past budget policy to maintain current levels of funding for staff development.

A Border Colloquy: Imagining La Frontera

In addition to the Secretarial initiatives and activities, collaboration between Mexico and the United States has also taken place in a series of meetings to facilitate collaboration and planning for the education success of children and youth in the U.S./Mexico Border Region. Seven meetings were conducted during 1994: three in Mexico and four in the United States. At these meetings, residents of La Frontera—the region along the boundary between the United States and Mexico—envisioned the future of education for children in an expanded community that spans the boundary. The results sought were to develop common understanding about the educational issues and needs facing La Frontera as it experiences massive cultural and economic change; to foster a binationally shared vision for the education and well-being of the region's children and youth; and to begin the process of developing comprehensive, binational plans to fulfill that vision. The Border Colloquy is sponsored by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. (See Chapter 11 for more information about this effort.)

Other Recent Developments

The convention between Mexico and the United States for the avoidance of double taxation stipulates that contributions made by a citizen or resident of the United States to a Mexican organization operated for scientific, literary, or educational purposes shall be treated as tax deductible, and vice versa for a Mexican contribution made to a U.S. institution. Through this provision, resources are made available that were once difficult to direct toward education (Luke, 1994).

This is an important step forward, since it allows the involvement of the private sector. A useful further development would be the creation of an

umbrella organization to work exclusively on establishing educational exchanges. Schools in both countries currently are conducting educational exchanges; now is an appropriate time to convert those isolated efforts into ongoing arrangements to strengthen and perpetuate the existing linkages.

Conclusions

The teacher exchange summer program and the teacher training summer institute of the Binational Initiative serve as a great challenge for our Hispanic teachers and all other teachers who provide direct services to Hispanic students. OBEMLA, the Secretary of Public Education of Mexico, state education agencies, local education agencies, and institutions of higher education have accepted that challenge to work together to have teachers prepared to help Mexican, Mexican American, and Hispanic students to improve their high school graduation rate.

The Binational Initiative between the U.S. Department of Education and the Secretaríat of Public Education of Mexico, through the Memorandum of Understanding and its annexes, has sparked a number of activities, meetings, and conferences. These activities in turn have produced a strong current of collaboration and understanding, not only at the federal and state levels in both countries, but also in the education community.

Institutions of higher education, administrators, professors, and students are now engaged in programs that study and promote the languages and cultures of the United States and Mexico. Other programs give Mexican and U.S. teachers the opportunity to obtain bachelor's degrees or to update their bilingual teaching skills. Through these efforts, Hispanic students stand a better chance of receiving more appropriate education, which eventually should help decrease the Hispanic dropout rate and increase the rate of high school completion by Hispanics.

Besides advancing the cause of increasing the supply of bilingual teachers, the Binational Initiative supports the goals of President Clinton's Executive Order on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, which specifically orders an increase in opportunities for Hispanic Americans to participate in and benefit from federal education programs and in their progress toward the achievement of the National Education Goals and other standards of educational accomplishment (Clinton, 1994).

The time has come for specific actions to be taken to improve the education that we provide to our Mexican, Mexican American, and Hispanic students. The NAFTA treaty and the Memorandum of Understanding in Education between the United States and Mexico have provided the appropriate avenues.

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